





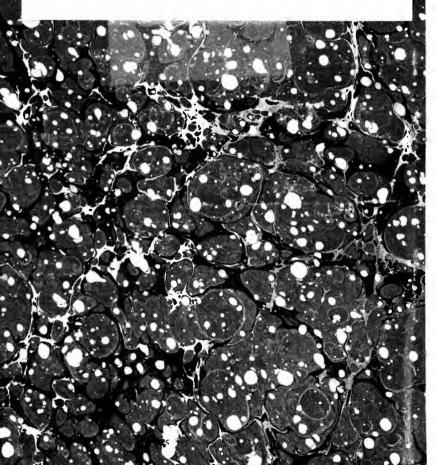
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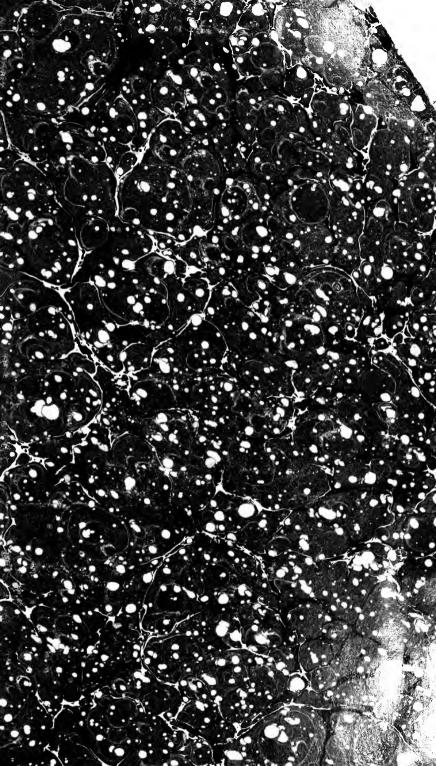
OF THE

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Little Journeys to the Homes of American Authors

Emerson

BY
GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS

JANUARY, 1896

New York and London: 5. p.
putnam's Sons * *
New Rochelle, N. Y.
Knickerbocker Press. *



Little Zournevs

SERIES FOR 1896

Little Journeys to the Homes of American Authors

The papers below specified, were, with the exception of that contributed by the editor, Mr. Hubbard, originally issued by the late G. P. Putnam, in 1853, in a series entitled It is now Homes of American Authors. nearly half a century since this series (which won for itself at the time a very noteworthy prestige) was brought before the public: and the present publishers feel that no apology is needed in presenting to a new generation of American readers papers of such distinctive biographical interest and literary value.

No. 1, Emerson, by Geo. W. Curtis.

2, Bryant, by Caroline M. Kirkland.

3, Prescott, by Geo. S. Hillard.

4, Lowell, by Charles F. Briggs.

5, Simms, by Wm. Cullen Bryant.

6, Walt Whitman, by Elbert Hubbard.

7, Hawthorne, by Geo. Wm. Curtis.

8, Audubon, by Parke Godwin.

9, Irving, by H. T. Tuckerman.

10, Longfellow, by Geo. Wm. Curtis.

11, Everett, by Geo. S. Hillard.

12, Bancroft, by Geo. W. Greene.

The above papers, which will form the series of Little Journeys for the year 1896, will be issued monthly, beginning January, in the same general style as the series of 1895, at 50cts. a year. Single copies, 5 cts., postage paid.

> Entered at the Post Office, New Rochelle, N. Y., as second class matter

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THE KNICKERBOCKER PRESS, NEW ROCHELLE, N. Y.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

In 1853, the late G. P. Putnam published, under the title of Homes of American Authors," a collection of papers which had been written for this work by a group of the younger writers of the day, and which were devoted to studies and descriptions of the homes and of the work of certain representative American authors of the time. The plan of the series originated, we understand, with the publisher, while it is probable that its editorial direction rested either with Henry T. Tuckerman or Charles F. Briggs ("Harry Franco"), who was at the time editor of Putnam's Monthly. Among the contributors were several writers whose work has since made for itself a place in the enduring literature of the century. Of these contributors (a list of whom will be found on the preceeding page) but two, Parke Godwin and Edward Everett Hale, are still (December, 1895) surviving.

Publisbers' Rote

The successors of G. P. Putnam have thought that the generation which has grown up since the first publication of this book would be interested in reading these literary studies of half a century back. It has, therefore, been decided to reprint the papers as the second group of the series of *Little Journeys*, the publication of which has been initiated with the twelve papers of Mr. Elbert Hubbard issued in 1895.

These papers of 1853 are printed as originally written for Mr. Putnam's volume, and as a matter of justice to authors who, like Mr. Curtis and Mr. Godwin, have since written more comprehensively on the same subjects, the date of the original publication has in each case been specified. There is a certain literary interest in having again before us the point of view of these writers of 1853, even althoughin certain cases their final conclusions may have been somewhat modified, or their maturer literary judgment may have arrived at some different form of literary expression.



His goodness seems better than our goodness, his nature finer, his temptations less. Everything that is his,—his name, his form, his dress, books, and instruments,—fancy enhances.

Essay on Friendship.

FOREWORD

They are gone-writer and subject-The dust of Emerson rests in gone. "Sleepy Hollow": a great unhewn bowlder marks the spot. He died in 1882; Curtis followed ten years later. But their works live after them: for beautiful lives and great thoughts endure. They make that sweet minor chord in the choir invisible, whose music is the gladness of the world. Curtis was in his twenty-ninth year when he wrote this sketch; Emerson was fifty-his fame secure. No living writer, no matter how richly gifted, could write so precious a monograph as this on the same theme; 't would lack that quaint old flavor and fragrance, as of lavender and thyme.

E. H.

There economics the state of th

EMERSON.

BY GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.*

HE village of Concord, Massachusetts, lies an hour's ride from Boston. It is one of those quiet New England towns whose few white houses, grouped upon the plain, make but a slight impression upon the mind of the busy traveller hurrying to or from the city. As the conductor calls "Concord!" the tourist has scarcely time to recall "Concord, Lexington, and Bunker Hill," before the place has vanished, and he is darting through woods and fields as solitary as those he has just left in New

^{*} Written in 1853 for Putnam's Homes of Ameri-

Hampshire. Yet, as it vanishes, he may chance to see two or three spires, and as they rush behind the trees his eyes fall upon a gleaming sheet of water. It is Walden Pond .-- or Walden Water, as Orphic Alcott used to call it.-whose virgin seclusion was a just image of that of the little village until one afternoon, some half-dozen or more years since, a shriek, sharper than any that had rung from Walden woods since the last war-whoop of the last Indians of Musketaquid, announced to astonished Concord, drowsing in the river meadows, that the nineteenth century had overtaken it. Yet long before the material force of the age bound the town to the rest of the world, the spiritual force of a single mind in it had attracted attention to it, and made its lonely plains as dear to many widelyscattered minds as the groves of the Academy or the vineyards of Vaucluse.

Except in causing the erection of the railway buildings and several dwellings near it, steam has not much changed

Concord. It is yet one of the quiet country towns whose charm is incredible to all but those who by loving it have found it worthy of love. The shire-town of the great agricultural county of Middlesex, it is not disturbed by the feverish throb of factories, nor by any roar of inexorable toil but the few puffs of the locomotive. One day, during the autumn, it is thronged by the neighboring farmers, who hold their high festival-the annual cattle-show-there. But the calm tenor of Concord life is not varied even on that day by anything more exciting than fat oxen and the cud-chewing eloquence of the agricultural dinner. The population of the region is composed of sturdy, sterling men, worthy representatives of the ancestors who sowed along the Concord shores, with their seed-corn and rye, the germs of a prodigious national greatness. At intervals every day the rattle, roar, and whistle of the swift shuttle darting to and from the metropolitan heart of New England, weaving prosperity upon the

land, remind those farmers in their silent fields that the great world yet wags and wrestles. And the farmer-boy, sweeping with flashing scythe through the river meadows, whose coarse grass glitters, apt for mowing, in the early June morning, pauses as the whistle dies into the distance, and, wiping his brow and whetting his blade anew, questions the country-smitten citizen, the amateur farmer struggling with imperfect stroke behind him of the mystic romance of city life.

The sluggish repose of the little river images the farmer-boy's life. He bullies his oxen and trembles at the locomotive. His wonder and fancy stretch toward the great world beyond the barn-yard and the village church, as the torpid stream tends toward the ocean. The river, in fact, seems the thread upon which all the beads of that rustic life are strung,—the clew to its tranquil character. If it were an impetuous stream, dashing along as if it claimed and required the career to

which every American river is entitled, -a career it would have. Wheels, factories, shops, traders, factory-girls, boards of directors, dreary white lines of boarding-houses, all the signs that indicate the spirit of the age, and of the American age, would arise upon its margin. Some shaven magician from State Street would run up by rail, and, from proposals, maps, schedules of stock, etc., educe a spacious factory as easily as Aladdin's palace arose from nothing. Instead of a dreaming, pastoral poet of a village, Concord would be a rushing, whirling, bustling manufacturer of a town, like its thrifty neighbor Lowell. Many a fine equipage, flashing along city ways; many an Elizabethan-Gothic-Grecian rural retreat. in which State Street woos Pan and grows Arcadian in summer, would be reduced, in the last analysis, to the Concord mills. Yet if these broad river meadows grew factories instead of corn, they might, perhaps, lack another harvest, of which the poet's thought is the sickle.

One harvest from your field Homeward brought the oxen strong, Another crop your acres yield, Which I gather in a song,

sings Emerson; and again, as the afternoon light strikes pensive across his memory, as over the fields below him,

> Knows he who tills this lonely field, To reap its scanty corn, What mystic crops his acres yield At midnight and at morn?

The Concord River—upon whose winding shores the town has scattered its few houses, as if, loitering over the plain some fervent day, it had fallen asleep obedient to the slumberous spell, and had not since awakened—is a languid, shallow stream, that loiters through broad meadows, which fringe it with rushes and long grasses. Its sluggish current scarcely moves the autumn leaves showered upon it by a few maples that lean over the Assabeth—as one of its branches is named. Yellow lily-buds and leathery lily-pads tessellate its surface, and the white water-lilies—pale,

proud ladies of Shalott-bare their bosoms to the sun in the seclusion of its distant reaches. Clustering vines of wild grape hang its wooded shores with a tapestry of the South and the Rhine. The pickerel-weed marks with blue spikes of flowers the points where small tributary brooks flow in, and along the dusky winding of those brooks, cardinalflowers with a scarlet splendor paint the Tropics upon New England's green. All summer long, from founts unknown, in the upper counties, from some anonymous pond, or wooded hillside moist with springs, steals the gentle river through the plain, spreading at one point above the town into a little lake, called by the farmers "Fairhaven Bay," as if all its lesser names must share the sunny significance of Concord. Then, shrinking again, alarmed at its own boldness, it dreams on toward the Merrimac and the sea.

The absence of factories has already implied its shallowness and slowness. In

truth it is a very slow river, belonging much more to the Indian than to the Yankee; so much so, indeed, that until a very few years there was an annual visit to its shores from a few sad heirs of its old masters, who pitched a group of tents in the meadows, and wove their tidy baskets and strung their beads in unsmiling silence. It was the same thing that I saw in Jerusalem among the Jews. Every Friday they repair to the remains of the old Temple wall, and pray and wail, kneeling upon the pavement and kissing the stones. But that passionate Oriental regret was not more impressive than this silent homage of a waning race, who, as they beheld the unchanged river, knew that, unlike it, the last drops of their existence were gradually flowing away, and that for their tribes there shall be no ingathering.

So shallow is the stream that the amateur Corydons who embark at morning to explore its remoter shores will not infrequently, in midsummer, find their

boat as suddenly tranquil and motionless as the river, having placidly grounded upon its oozy bottom. Or, returning at evening, they may lean over the edge as they lie at length in the boat, and float with the almost imperceptible current, brushing the tips of the long water-grass and reeds below them in the stream-a river jungle, in which lurk pickerel and trout-with the sensation of a bird drifting upon soft evening air over the treetops. No available or profitable craft navigate these waters, and animated gentlemen from the city, who run up for "a mouthful of fresh air," cannot possibly detect the final cause of such a river. Yet the dreaming idler has place on maps and a name in history.

Near the town it is crossed by three or four bridges. One is a massive structure to help the railroad over. The stern, strong pile readily betrays that it is part of good, solid stock owned in the right quarter. Close by it is a little arched stone bridge, auxiliary to a great road

leading to some vague region of the world called Acton upon guideposts and on maps. Just beyond these bridges the river bends, and forgets the railroad, but is grateful to the graceful arch of the little stone bridge for making its curve more picturesque; and, as it muses toward the Old Manse, listlessly brushing the lilies, it wonders if Ellery Channing, who lives beyond, upon a hillside sloping to the shore, wrote his poem of *The Bridge* to that particular one. There are two or three wooden bridges also, always combining well with the landscape, always making and suggesting pictures.

The Concord, as I said, has a name in history. Near one of the wooden bridges you turn aside from the main road, close by the "Old Manse,"—whose mosses of mystic hue were gathered by Hawthorne, who lived there for three years,—and a few steps bring you to the river, and to a small monument upon its brink. It is a narrow, grassy way; not a field nor a meadow, but of that shape and charac-

ter which would perplex the animated stranger from the city, who would see, also, its unfitness for a building-lot. The narrow, grassy way is the old road which, in the month of April, 1775, led to a bridge that crossed the stream at this spot. And upon the river's margin, upon the bridge and the shore beyond, took place the sharp struggle between the Middlesex farmers and the scarlet British soldiers, known in tradition as "The Concord fight."

The small monument records the day and the event. When it was erected, Emerson wrote the following hymn for the ceremony:

APRIL 19, 1836.

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,

Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,

Here once the embattled farmers stood,

And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept;
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;
And Time the ruined bridge has swept

**
Down the dark stream that seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,
We see to-day a votive stone,
That memory may their deed redeem,
When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit that made these heroes dare
To die, or leave their children free,
Bid Time and Nature gently spare
The shaft we raise to them and Thee.

Close under the rough stone wall at the left, which separates it from the grassy orchard of the Manse, is a small mound of turf and a broken stone. Grave and headstone shrink from sight amid the grass and under the wall, but they mark the earthly bed of the first victims of that first fight. A few large trees overhang the ground, which Hawthorne thinks have been planted since that day, and he says that in the river he has seen mossy timbers of the old bridge, and on the farther bank, half-hidden, the crumbling stone abutments that supported it. In an old house upon the main road, nearly opposite the entrance to this grassy way, I knew a hale old woman

who well remembered the gay advance of the flashing soldiers, the terrible ring and crack of firearms, and the panic-stricken retreat of the regulars, black-ened and bloody. But the placid river has long since overborne it all. The alarm, the struggle, the retreat, are swallowed up in its supreme tranquillity. The summers of more than seventy years have obliterated every trace of the road with thick grass, which seeks to bury the graves as earth buried the victims.

Let the sweet ministry of summer avail. Let its mild iteration even sap the monument and conceal its stones as it hides the abutment in foliage; for, still on the sunny slopes, white with the May blossoming of apple-orchards, and in the broad fields, golden to the marge of the river, and tilled in security and peace, survives the imperishable remembrance of that day and its results.

The river is thus the main feature of the Concord landscape. It is surrounded by a wide plain, from which rise only

three or four low hills. One is a wooded cliff over Fairhaven Bay, a mile from the town; one separates the main river from the Assabeth; and just beyond the battleground another rises, rich with orchards. to a fine wood which crowns its summit. The river meadows blend with broad, lonely fields. A wide horizon, like that of the prairie or the sea, is the grand charm of Concord. At night the stars are seen from the roads crossing the plain, as from a ship at sea. The landscape would be called tame by those who think no scenery grand but that of mountains or the sea-coast. But the wide solitude of that region is not so accounted by those who live there. To them it is rich and suggestive, as Emerson shows in the Essay on Nature: " My house stands in low land, with limited outlook, and on the skirt of the village. But I go with my friend to the shore of our little river, and with one stroke of the paddle I leave the village politics and personalities-yes, and the world of villages and personali-

ties-behind, and pass into a delicate realm of sunset and moonlight, too bright almost for spotted man to enter without novitiate and probation. We penetrate bodily this incredible beauty; we dip our hands in this painted element; our eyes are bathed in these lights and forms. A holiday, a royal revel, the proudest, most heart-rejoicing festival that valor and beauty, power and taste ever decked and enjoyed, establishes itself upon the instant. . . . In every landscape the point of astonishment is the meeting of the sky and the earth, and that is seen from the first hillock, as well as from the top of the Alleghanies. The stars stoop down over the brownest, homeliest common, with all the spiritual magnificence which they shed on the Campagna or on the marble deserts of Egypt."

He is speaking here, of course, of the spiritual excitement of beauty, which crops up everywhere in Nature, like gold in a rich region; but the quality of the imagery indicates the character of

the scenery in which the essay was written.

Concord is too far from Boston to rival in garden cultivation its neighbors. West Cambridge, Lexington, and Waltham: nor can it boast, with Brookline, Dorchester, and Cambridge, the handsome summer homes of city wealth. But it surpasses them all, perhaps, in a genuine country freshness and feeling derived from its loneliness. If not touched by city elegance, neither is it infected by city meretriciousness-it is sweet, wholesome country. By climbing one of the hills, your eye sweeps a wide, wide landscape, until it rests upon graceful Wachuset, or, farther and mistier, Monadnoc, the lofty outpost of New Hampshire hills. Level scenery is not tame. The ocean, the prairie, the desert are not tame, although of monotonous surface. The gentle undulations which mark certain scenes,—a rippling landscape, in which all sense of space, of breadth, and of height is lost,—that is tame. It may be made beautiful by ex-

quisite cultivation, as it often is in England and on parts of the Hudson shores, but it is, at best, rather pleasing than inspiring. For a permanent view the eye craves large and simple forms, as the body requires plain food for its best nourishment.

The town of Concord is built mainly upon one side of the river. In its centre is a large open square shaded by fine elms. A white wooden church, in the most classical style of Yankee-Greek, stands upon the square. At the Court-House, in the days when I knew Concord, many conventions were held for humane as well as political objects. One summer day I especially remember, when I did not envy Athens its Forum, for Emerson and William Ellery Channing spoke. In the speech of both burned the sacred fire of eloquence, but in Emerson it was light, and in Channing, heat.

From this square diverge four roads, like highways from a forum. One leads by the Court-House and under stately

sycamores to the Old Manse and the battle-ground, another goes directly to the river, and a third is the main avenue of the town. After passing the shops this third divides, and one branch forms a fair and noble street, spacious, and loftily arched with elms, the houses standing liberally apart, each with its garden-plot in front. The fourth avenue is the old Boston road, also dividing, at the edge of the village, into the direct route to the metropolis and the Lexington turnpike.

The house of Mr. Emerson stands opposite this junction. It is a plain, square, white dwelling-house, yet it has a city air, and could not be mistaken for a farm-house. A quiet merchant, you would say, unostentatious and simple, has here hidden himself from town. But a thick grove of pine and fir trees, almost brushing the two windows upon the right of the door, and occupying the space between them and the road, suggests at least a peculiar taste in the retired mer-

chant, or hints the possibility that he may have sold his place to a poet or philosopher,—or to some old East India sea-captain, perhaps, who cannot sleep without the sound of waves, and so plants pines to rustle, surf-like, against his chamber-window.

The fact, strangely enough, partly supports your theory. In the year 1828 Mr. C. Coolidge, a brother of I. Templeman Coolidge, a merchant of repute in Boston. and grandson of Joseph Coolidge, a patriarchal denizen of Bowdoin Square in that city, came to Concord and built this house. Gratefully remembering the lofty horse-chestnuts which shaded the city square, and which, perhaps, first inspired him with the wish to be a nearer neighbor of woods and fields, he planted a row of them along his lot, which this year ripen their twenty-fifth harvest. With the liberal hospitality of a New England merchant, he did not forget the spacious cellars of the city, and, as Mr. Emerson writes, "he built the only good

cellar that had then been built in Concord."

Mr. Emerson bought the house in the year 1835. He found it a plain, convenient, and thoroughly-built country residence. An amiable neighbor of Mr. Coolidge had placed a miserable old barn irregularly upon the edge of that gentleman's lot, which, for the sake of comeliness, he was forced to buy and set straight and smooth into a decent dependence of the mansion-house. The estate, upon passing into Mr. Emerson's hands, comprised the house, barn, and two acres of land. He enlarged the house and barn, and the two acres have grown to nine. Our author is no farmer, except as every country gentleman is, yet the kindly slope from the rear of the house to a little brook, which, passing to the calm Concord beyond, washes the edge of his land, yields him at least occasional beans and peas; or some friend, agriculturally enthusiastic, and an original Brook Farmer, experiments with guano in the garden,

and produces melons and other vines with a success that relieves Brook Farm from every slur of inadequate practical genius. Mr. Emerson has shaded his originally bare land with trees, and counts near a hundred apple and pear trees in his orchard. The whole estate is quite level, inclining only toward the little brook, and is well watered and convenient.

The Orphic Alcott, -or Plato Skimpole, as Margaret Fuller called him,-wellknown in the transcendental history of New England, designed and with his own hands erected a summer-house, which gracefully adorns the lawn, if I may so call the smooth grass-plot at the side of the house. Unhappily, this edifice promises no long duration, not being "technically based and pointed." This is not a strange, although a disagreeable fact to Mr. Emerson, who has been always the most faithful and appreciating of the lovers of Mr. Alcott. It is natural that the Orphic Alcott should build graceful summer-houses. There are even people

who declare that he has covered the pleasant but somewhat misty lawns of ethical speculation with a thousand such edifices. which need only to be a little more "technically based and pointed" to be quite perfect. At present, they whisper, the wind blows clean through them, and no figures of flesh and blood are ever seen there, but only pallid phantoms with large, calm eves, eating uncooked grain out of baskets, and discoursing in a sublime shibboleth of which mortals have no key. But how could Plato Skimpole, who goes down to Hingham on the sea, in a New England January, clad only in a suit of linen, hope to build immortal summer-houses?

Mr. Emerson's library is the room at the right of the door upon entering the house. It is a simple square room, not walled with books like the den of a literary grub, nor merely elegant like the ornamental retreat of a dilettante. The books are arranged upon plain shelves, not in architectural bookcases, and the

room is hung with a few choice engravings of the greatest men. There was a fair copy of Michael Angelo's Fates. which, properly enough, imparted that grave serenity to the ornament of the room which is always apparent in what is written there. It is the study of a scholar. All our author's published writings, the essays, orations, and poems, date from this room, as much as they date from any place or moment. The villagers, indeed. fancy their philosophic neighbor affected by the novelist James's constancy of composition. They relate, with wide eyes, that he has a huge manuscript book, in which he incessantly records the ends of thoughts, bits of observation and experience, and facts of all kinds,-a kind of intellectual and scientific rag-bag, into which all shreds and remnants of conversations and reminiscences of wayside reveries are incontinently thrust. This work goes on, they aver, day and night: and when he travels, the rag-bag travels too, and grows more plethoric with each

mile of the journey. And a story, which will one day be a tradition, is perpetuated, that one night, before his wife had become completely accustomed to his habits, she awoke suddenly, and hearing him groping about the room, inquired anxously:

"My dear, are you ill?"

"No, my love, only an idea."

The library is not only the study of a scholar, it is the bower of a poet. The pines lean against the windows, and to the student deeply sunk in learned lore, or soaring upon the daring speculations of an intrepid philosophy, they whisper a secret beyond that of the philosopher's stone, and sing of the springs of poetry.

The site of the house is not memorable. There is no reasonable ground to suppose that so much as an Indian wigwam ever occupied the spot; nor has Henry Thoreau, a very faithful friend of Mr. Emerson's, and of the woods and waters of his native Concord, ever found an Indian arrowhead upon the premises. Henry's

instinct is as sure toward the facts of nature as the witch-hazel toward treasure. If every quiet country town in New England had a son who, with a lore like Selbourne's, and an eye like Buffon's, had watched and studied its landscape and history, and then published the result, as Thoreau has done, in a book as redolent of genuine and perceptive sympathy with nature as a clover-field of honey. New England would seem as poetic and beautiful as Greece. Thoreau lives in a blackberry pasture upon a bank over Walden pond, in a little house of his own building. One pleasant summer afternoon a small party of us helped him raise it,-a bit of life as Arcadian as any at Brook Farm. Elsewhere in the village he turns up arrowheads abundantly, and Hawthorne mentions that Thoreau initiated him into the mystery of finding them. But neither the Indians, nor Nature, nor Thoreau can invest the quiet residence of our author with the dignity, or even the suspicion,

of a legend. History stops short in that direction with Charles Coolidge, Esq., and the year 1828.

There is little prospect from the house. Directly opposite, a low bluff overhangs the Boston road and obstructs the view. Upon the other sides the level land stretches away. Toward Lexington it is a broad, half-marshy region, and between the brook behind and the river, good farms lie upon the outskirts of the town. Pilgrims drawn to Concord by the desire of conversing with the man whose written or spoken eloquence has so profoundly charmed them, and who have placed him in some pavilion of fancy, some peculiar residence, find him in no porch of philosophy nor academic grove, but in a plain white house by the wayside, ready to entertain every comer as an ambassador from some remote Cathay of speculation whence the stars are more nearly seen.

But the familiar reader of our author will not be surprised to find the poet

simply sheltered, and the endless experimenter, with no past at his back, housed without ornament. Such a reader will have felt the Spartan severity of this intellect, and have noticed that the realm of this imagination is rather sculpturesque than pictorial, more Greek than Italian. Therefore he will be pleased to alight at the gate, and hear the breezy welcome of the pines, and the no less cordial salutation of their owner. For if the visitor knows what he is about, he has come to this plain for bracing mountain air. These serious Concord reaches are no vale of Cashmere. Where Plato Skimpole is architect of the summerhouse, you may imagine what is to be expected in the mansion itself. It is always morning within those doors. If you have nothing to say,-if you are really not an envoy from some kingdom or colony of thought, and cannot cast a gem upon the heaped pile, -you had better pass by on the other side. For it is the peculiarity of Emerson's mind to be al-

ways on the alert. He eats no lotus, but forever quaffs the waters which engender immortal thirst.

If the memorabilia of his house could find their proper Xenophon, the want of antecedent arrowheads upon the premises would not prove very disastrous to the interest of the history. The fame of the philosopher attracts admiring friends and enthusiasts from every quarter, and the scholarly grace and urbane hospitality of the gentleman send them charmed away. Friendly foes, who altogether differ from Emerson, come to break a lance with him upon the level pastures of Concord, with all the cheerful and appreciative zeal of those who longed

To drink delight of battle with their peers Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.

It is not hazardous to say that the greatest questions of our day and of all days, have been nowhere more amply discussed with more poetic insight or profound conviction than in the comely,

square white house upon the edge of the Lexington turnpike. There have even been attempts at something more formal and club-like than the chance conversations of occasional guests, one of which will certainly be nowhere recorded but upon these pages.

It was in the year 1845 that a circle of persons of various ages, and differing very much in everything but sympathy, found themselves in Concord. Toward the end of the autumn Mr. Emerson suggested that they should meet every Monday evening through the winter in his library, "Monsieur Aubenine," "Miles Coverdale," and other phantoms, since generally known as Nathaniel Hawthorne, who then occupied the Old Manse; the inflexible Henry Thoreau, a scholastic and pastoral Orson, then living among the blackberry pastures of Walden pond; Plato Skimpole, then sublimely meditating impossible summerhouses in a little house upon the Boston road; the enthusiastic agriculturist and

Brook Farmer already mentioned, then an inmate of Mr. Emerson's house, who added the genial cultivation of a scholar to the amenities of the natural gentleman; a sturdy farmer neighbor, who had bravely fought his weary way through inherited embarrassments to the small success of a New England husbandman, and whose faithful wife had seven times merited well of her country; two city youths, ready for the fragments from the feast of wit and wisdom, and the host himself composed this Club. Ellery Channing, who had that winter harnessed his Pegasus to the New York Tribune. was a kind of corresponding member. The news of the world was to be transmitted through his eminently practical genius, as the Club deemed itself competent to take charge of tidings from all other spheres.

I went the first Monday evening, very much as Ixion may have gone to his banquet. The philosophers sat dignified and erect. There was a constrained, but

very amiable, silence, which had the impertinence of a tacit inquiry, seeming to ask: "Who will now proceed to say the finest thing that has ever been said?" It was quite voluntary and unavoidable. for the members lacked that fluent social genius without which a club is impossible. It was a congress of oracles on the one hand, and of curious listeners upon the other. I vaguely remember that the Orphic Alcott invaded the Sahara of silence with a solemn "saying," to which, after due pause, the honorable member for Blackberry Pastures responded by some keen and graphic observation; while the Olympian host, auxious that so much good material should be spun into something, beamed smiling encouragement upon all parties.

But the conversation became more and more staccato. Miles Coverdale, a statue of night and silence, sat, a little removed, under a portrait of Dante, gazing imperturbably upon the group; and as he sat in the shadow, his dark hair and eyes

and suit of sables made him, in that society, the black thread of mystery which he weaves into his stories, while the shifting presence of the Brook Farmer played like heat-lightning around the room.

I recall little else but a grave eating of russet apples by the erect philosophers. and a solemn disappearance into the night. The Club struggled through three Monday evenings. Plato was perpetually putting apples of gold in pictures of silver; for such was the rich ore of his thoughts, coined by the deep melody of his voice. Orson charmed us with the secrets won from his interviews with Pan in the Walden woods-while Emerson. with the zeal of an engineer trying to dam wild waters, sought to bind the wide-flying embroidery of discourse into a web of clear, sweet sense. But still in vain. The oracular sayings were the unalloyed saccharine element; and every chemist knows how much else goes to practical food; how much coarse, rough, woody fibre is essential.

The Club struggled on valiantly, discoursing celestially, eating apples, and disappearing in the dark, until the third evening it vanished altogether. Yet I have since known clubs of fifty times that number, whose collective genius was not more than of either one of the Dii Majores of our Concord coterie. The fault was its too great concentration. It was not relaxation, as a club should be, but tension. Society is a play, a game, a tournament; not a battle. It is the easy grace of undress; not an intellectual, full-dress parade.

I have already hinted this unbending intellectual alacrity of our author. His sport is serious—his humor is earnest. He stands like a sentinel. His look and manner and habit of thought cry; "Who goes there?" and if he does not hear the countersign, he brings the intruder to a halt. It is for this surprising fidelity and integrity that his influence has been so deep, and sure, and permanent, upon the intellectual life of the young men of New

England; and of Old England, too, where in Manchester there were regular weekly meetings at which his works were read. What he said long ago in his preface to the American edition of Carlyle's Miscellanies, that they were papers which had spoken to the young men of the time "with an emphasis that hindered them from sleep," is strikingly true of his own writings. His first slim, anonymous duodecimo, Nature, was as fair and fascinating to the royal young minds who met it in the course of their reading, as Egeria to Numa wandering in the grove. The essays, orations, and poems followed, developing and elaborating the same spiritual and heroic philosophy, applying it to life, history, and literature, with a vigor and richness so supreme, that not only do many account him our truest philosopher, but others acknowledge him as our most characteristic poet.

It would be a curious inquiry how

much and what kind of influence the placid scenery of Concord has exercised upon his mind. "I chide society, I embrace solitude" he says; "and yet I am not so ungrateful as not to see the wise, the lovely, and the noble minded, as from time to time they pass my gate." It is not difficult to understand his fondness for the spot. He has been always familiar with it, always more or less a resident of the village.

Born in Boston, upon the spot where the Chauncey Place Church now stands, part of his youth was passed in the Old Manse, which was built by his grandfather, and in which his father was born; and there he wrote Nature. From the magnificent admiration of ancestral England, he was glad to return to quiet Concord, and to acres which will not yield a single arrowhead.

The Swiss sigh for their mountains; but the Nubians pine for their desert plains. Those who are born by the sea long annually to return, and to rest their

eyes upon its living horizon. Is it because the earliest impressions, made when the mind is most plastic, are most durable, or because youth is that golden age bounding the confines of memory, and floating forever an alluring mirage as we recede farther from it?

The imagination of the man who roams the solitary pastures of Concord, or floats dreamily down its river, will easily see its landscape upon Emerson's pages. "That country is fairest," he says, "which is inhabited by the noblest minds."

And although that idler upon the river may have leaned over the Mediterranean from Genoese and Neapolitan villas, or have glanced down the steep, green valley of Sicilian Enna, or walked the shores where Cleopatra and Helen walked, yet the charm of a landscape which is felt, rather than seen, will be imperishable. "Travelling is a Fool's Paradise," says Emerson. But he passed Concord's gates to learn that lesson. His writings, however, have no imported air. If there

be something Oriental in his philosophy and tropical in his imagination, they have yet the strong flavor of his Mother Earth, the underived sweetness of the open Concord sky, and the spacious breadth of the Concord horizon.

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